

Sunday School

PAUL'S THIRD MISSIONARY JOURNEY. (THE RIOT IN EPHESUS.)

Acts 19:23-30, 35-41.

Lesson for August 22, 1909.

GOLDEN TEXT.—"He said unto me, My grace is sufficient for thee, for my strength is made perfect in weakness."—2 Cor. 12:9.

DAILY HOME READINGS.

M.—Acts 19: 23-31.

T.—Acts 19: 32-20: 1.

W.—Isa. 44: 9-19.

Th.—Ps. 115.

F.—1 Cor. 16: 1-9.

S.—Eph. 2: 11-22.

S.—Eph. 6:10-20.

SHORTER CATECHISM.

Q. 69. What is forbidden in the sixth commandment?

A. The sixth commandment forbiddeth the taking away of our own life, or the life of our neighbor unjustly, or whatsoever tendeth thereunto.

TOPICAL OUTLINE.

Opposition to the Gospel—

By men in a bad business, vs. 23-27.

Who stirred up the whole city, vs. 28, 29.

Paul's courage, vs. 30-34.

The town clerk's prudent speech, vs. 35-41.

LESSON COMMENTS.

Paul had sent Timothy and Erastus into Macedonia and himself purposed to go there after Pentecost; but he remained in Ephesus on account of the many adversaries and also because of the great and effectual door open to him. 1 Cor. 16: 8-9.

Ephesus was the seat of the worship of Diana and here was the great temple of that goddess which for magnificence and fame was considered one of the wonders of the world. The people of Ephesus had given lavishly for its embellishment and all the cities of Asia had contributed to its building. It was the center of Ephesian pride and devotion and in it were concentrated their admiration, enthusiasm and superstition.

It was the custom among the visitors to Ephesus to buy models of this temple and images of the goddess to take with them on journeys or military expeditions or for use as household gods. These were made of wood or gold or silver. We can imagine a very extensive trade in these shrines and that numbers of workmen were engaged in their making. Few who came to Ephesus would go away without one of these memorials.

It was probably the month of May, the month of Diana, when the riot took place. Great numbers of worshippers from all over the world had gathered here to celebrate the games of that month. The craftsmen expected a large trade in the shrines but found the sale of them greatly diminished; consequently there arose no small stir about that "way" in which the Apostle was leading the people.

Demetrius, a leading silversmith and manufacturer of shrines, called together his fellow craftsmen and other workmen who profited by the presence of the Diana worship and addressed to them an inflammatory speech. He attributed to Paul and the Christians the danger to their trade. He appealed to their interests, telling them that Paul taught that an idol made of silver or gold by man's hand was not a true god. Demetrius and his fellows would have cared little for Paul's doctrine provided it had not touched their purses. The powers of evil are willing that the Church should preach any doctrine so long as they do not feel the practice of it. This is the secret of the accusation against so many churches and ministers that they meddle with things that do not concern them. It is an objection to a religion that produces effects in the hearts and lives of its disciples.

To make his appeal more disinterested, he appeals to their

fanaticism and their enthusiasm for the gorgeous worship of their magnificent temple which attracted all Asia and the world.

This appeal fired the mob and they broke out in the cry of "Great is Diana of the Ephesians." The cry was taken up by other citizens and the strangers and soon the city was in an uproar. A general rush was made to the theatre, the place of assembly. On the way they caught Gaius and Aristarchus who had accompanied Paul from Macedonia and were his fellow workers. Paul, with his accustomed bravery, would rush to their help when he heard of their danger, but the disciples used all their efforts to keep him from the place of danger. Certain influential friends of Paul, Asiarchs or chief men of the province, added their entreaties to those of the disciples and he consented to remain away from the theatre.

In the theatre was a scene of confusion. Some cried one thing, and some another. The larger part did not know why they had come together, but had blindly followed the instigator of the riot and in their excitement were ripe for any kind of mischief.

The Jews, who were probably afraid that they would be implicated in the accusation against the Christians, put Alexander forward that he might make a defense or explain that they had no connection with the church of Paul. This was probably "Alexander the coppersmith" against whom the Apostle warns Timothy at a later period. (2 Tim. 4: 14.) On account of his trade, the Jews thought he would have influence with the silversmiths. But when the Ephesians recognized him as a Jew, of that sect which also disbelieved in Diana, they refused to hear him, but drowned his voice in the cry "Great is Diana of the Ephesians", which cry they continued for the space of two hours.

They could not keep this cry and excitement indefinitely and the "town clerk" finally quieted the people. This official was a magistrate of great authority. He had to do with State papers, a keeper of the archives, the public reader before the senate and assembly, he was present when money was deposited in the Temple and all letters sent to Ephesus were addressed to him. Hence he was before the public very often and his face was familiar to all the citizens and no one was more likely to have influence with them.

He first allays their fanatical passions by telling them that the whole world knew that Ephesus was the temple keeper of the great goddess and that no one had questioned this fact.

He then called their attention to the characters of these Christians who had conducted themselves in an orderly manner during their stay in the city, and who had not entered their temple or said anything that would outrage their feelings. Paul had spent none of his energy in fulminating against the existing condition in Ephesus, but had used his energies in teaching the people the religion of Jesus, and that was the most effective way in which he could combat their idolatry.

The town clerk was not deceived as to the motive of Demetrius but accuses them of using the religious fanaticism of the mob to further their own interests. He points out that the proper course for Demetrius to take if he had a matter against the Christians, was to take it to court or to appeal it to the deputies. The court was then in session and this was the reasonable course to pursue. He further points out that they could not do justice in such a mob, but such matters should be determined in a lawful assembly.

He also reminded them that such an uproar would attract the attention of the Roman authorities and that they would be called to account for disturbing the public peace.

The mob, now informed as to the true nature of the disturbance, were quieted and the town clerk dismissed them and they left the theatre to go to their work or to the games.

It appears that Paul by his judicious conduct had gained for himself and his cause friends among the most influential and wealthy citizens of the city and these men proved their friendship by protecting him from danger.

After the uproar had ceased and the danger was past, Paul thought it best not to delay his departure which he had already determined upon. He called his disciples together in their meeting place and after an affectionate farewell, he departed to go into Macedonia.

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